



Hendry County Sheriff's Office

General Order 5.13

TITLE: Social Media	SHERIFF'S APPROVAL: Digital
ORIGINATION DATE: August 4, 2018	REVISION DATE: May 14, 2019
RELATED REFERENCES: <i>Chapter 119 F.S.</i>	
CFA: 32.05	
REVIEW FREQUENCY: 3 YEARS	DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: May 14, 2022

I. PURPOSE: The purpose of this order is to establish guidelines for members that use social networking sites.

II. SCOPE: This order shall apply to all sheriff's office members.

III. POLICY: Employees using any form of social media or social networking, shall not use them in any way which detracts from the mission of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office, tarnishes the reputation of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office, reflects negatively on your position as an employee of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office, or in a manner that violates any Hendry County Sheriff's Office directive. Any such online actions will be viewed as a direct violation of this policy, as well as any other applicable directive.

IV. PROCEDURE:

A. Legal

1. Government employees do have the right under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States to speak on matters of public concern; typically, these are matters concerning government policies that are of interest to the public at large, rather than matters which are of interest only to the employee. It has long been recognized that public employers may regulate employee speech, whether that speech is on duty or off duty, when that speech does not touch on matters of public concern.

B. Social Media

1. Employees are prohibited from using agency computers or agency cell phones to participate in HCSO social media or social networking, unless authorized to do so by the nature of the assignment, or by permission from their Division Commander or higher authority for investigative or public information purposes.

2. General Rules

- a. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of Sheriff's Office presence on the website; shall clearly indicate contact information and maintained by sheriff's office.
- b. Where possible, the page(s) should link to Sheriff's Office official website.
- c. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as youth or potential police recruits.
- d. The content of sheriff's office social media pages are subject to Florida's Public Records law. Relevant records retention schedules apply to the content of all social media pages.
- e. If applicable and where possible, sheriff's office social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the HCSO. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that HCSO reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- f. Sheriff's office personnel representing the agency via the agency's social media outlets shall:
 - (1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the agency and, accordingly shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - (2) Identify themselves as a member of the agency.
 - (3) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
 - (4) Not conduct political activities or private business.
- g. Employees shall not use personally owned devices to manage sheriff's office social media activities.

C. Employee Use of Social Media

- 1. Employees who choose to maintain or participate in social media or social networking platforms shall conduct themselves with professionalism and in such a manner that will not reflect negatively upon the sheriff's office or its mission.
- 2. Employees who utilize the Internet and social networking sites whether from an agency or personal device, are prohibited from posting any of the following on any social networking platform, either on their own sites, the sites of others known to them, the sites of others unknown to them, news media pages, or other information exchange forums:
 - a. Any statements or material about the sheriff's office, its operations, or its current or former employees that are obscene, defamatory, false, deceptive, misleading, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, etc.
 - b. Any confidential information related to Sheriff's Office operations or investigations or any information about members of the public obtained as a result of employment with the Sheriff's Office, as well as any information disclosed to the Sheriff's Office by a third party.

- c. Material which violates any laws, including intellectual property, copyrights, trademarks, state and/or federal laws.
 - d. Sheriff's Office logos, pictures of a Sheriff's Office vehicle or facility, printed literature, public service announcements, videos, podcasts, or any other HCSO-owned content without advance approval by the Sheriff.
 - e. Any commentary that pertains to the Sheriff's Office, without clear representation that the commentary is a personal opinion in such a way that no reasonable person would conclude that the commentary is representative of the HCSO's views, opinions, or position.
 - f. Any commentary on a social networking site that pertains to the sheriff's office without clearly and conspicuously disclosing the employment relationship between the employee and the sheriff's office, and clearly indicating that the employee is not authorized to make statements on behalf of the sheriff's office.
 - g. Sexually graphic material of any kind.
3. Employees must immediately bring to the attention of their supervisor any news media inquiries regarding the Sheriff's Office that results from their social networking activities.
 4. Employees will be held responsible for content that appears on their maintained social media or social networking sites and will be obligated to remove any posting that reflects negatively upon the Sheriff's office.
 5. This section does not apply to Sheriff's Office personnel who are conducting criminal investigations using social media and/or agency issued computer equipment. Those investigations may require the use of fictitious profiles and/or the access to restricted sites. Those investigations must be approved by the division supervisor.

V. GLOSSARY

WORLD WIDE WEB – computer network consisting of a collection of Internet sites that offer text and graphics and sound and animation resources through the hypertext protocol.

SOCIAL MEDIA – a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace; microblogging sites such as Twitter or Nixle; photo- and video-sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube; wikis such as Wikipedia; blogs; and news sites, such as Digg and Reddit.

SOCIAL NETWORK – using such Internet or mobile formats such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Gowalla Police Pulse, The Squad Room, Usenet groups, online forums, message boards or bulletin boards, blogs, and other similarly developed formats, to communicate with others using the same groups while also networking with other users based upon similar interests, geographical location, skills, occupation, ideology, beliefs, etc.

BLOG – a type of website or part of a website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

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